

**Project Background:**  
**Delta Emergency Planning Collaborative**  
**Emergency Planning Project for the 5-County Delta Region**

**Mission Statement**

The Delta Emergency Planning Collaborative will coordinate emergency planning efforts throughout the Delta region. The collaborative will result in a comprehensive Delta Emergency Planning and Response Strategy, the preparation of which relies on and is committed to partnerships with governmental and community-based organizations, citizens, and leaders. By bringing a variety of interests and expertise together, the Collaborative will ensure that local plans are supported, regional challenges are minimized, and public safety and protection are enhanced during times of emergency in the Delta.

**Overview**

The Delta Protection Commission (DPC) recently began a joint project with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) to develop a Delta-wide regional emergency strategy. Unlike some of the state, county, and local emergency plans already in place, the plan will focus on the societal issues of emergency response rather than the technical aspect of flood fighting—as well as developing a framework to coordinate active plans and initiatives in the Delta region. This effort is intended to help coordinate all of the existing emergency plans at the federal, state, county, and local levels and create a single, integrated strategy for emergency efforts in the event of major disaster.

Since December 6, 2007, the planning effort has taken shape with input from a variety of venues. Key individuals from groups including the Governor's Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force, the Delta 5-County Area Command for Flood Response, the Department of Water Resources (DWR), and The State OES staff have been briefed on the project and have voiced their support of its objectives.

Activities now underway through the DPC effort, with assistance from the Center for Collaborative Policy/CSUS, includes developing a key list of stakeholders involved in emergency work in the Delta; surveying emergency plans and initiatives active or anticipated; designing a methodology to review existing plans in order to identify shared assumptions, potential overlaps and any gaps; creating a detailed *Emergency Planning Strategy Report* that will encompass the full project; and meeting with key involved parties now, to outline the process underway and receive collaborative suggestions for the overall design of the project taking shape.

**Project Guiding Principles**

- The *Delta Protection Commission* and the *Governor's Office of Emergency Services* both agree there is a strong need to assist with coordination efforts for emergency preparedness and response planning in the Delta region—with a focus on regional emergency management collaboration involving all key local, state, federal and community stakeholders.
- Delta Protection Commission (DPC) convened a summit of local elected officials in June 2006 to discuss working together on delta wide emergency response planning to ensure a region wide approach and to help ensure the social aspects of emergency planning and response would be addressed. All 5 counties subsequently signed a Letter of Agreement for

participation in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Flood Response Group.

- Hurricane Katrina, the 2007 Southern California fires, the Jones Tract Incident and past Delta flood events have all underscored the need for heightened preparedness and planning to respond to large-scale emergencies in the Delta. However, the Delta Vision Context Memo identified two key differences from Katrina that make the need for comprehensive emergency planning and response in the Delta even more critical:
  - 90% of the Delta lies within the FEMA flood zone- a much larger area than New Orleans.
  - Delta waters are much colder and deeper than the Katrina floodwaters from Lake Pontchartrain, a fact that could increase the lethality of a major flood.
- The goal of this initiative is to engage regional stakeholders and to begin a *regional collaborative approach* that will enhance all emergency response efforts for the Delta.
- Potential funding sources for emergency planning and response, including the development of a delta-wide coordination strategy, should consider such a collaborative to be competitive as a *partnership* that considers the views, objectives, and needs of all stakeholders involved.
- Many agencies and organizations in the Delta have already developed exemplary technical flood fighting emergency response planning documents. Other planning efforts have also been developed, or are under way. The DPC initiative focuses on the need to ensure these plans are used in total and integrated into the Strategy, and that all aspects of a major emergency event have been considered.
- This DPC initiative will focus consideration on the societal, street-level issues surrounding an emergency response in the Delta, and 'partner' this information with other plans underway. The initiative should also include a public education element to inform the public about the dangers posed by a major flood such as:
  - The likelihood that in the event of a major flood, citizens will need to take care of themselves and their families for as long as 72 hours before help arrives.
  - The potential depth of flood waters and the need to have direct access to the roof of residences—etc.
- The societal issues to be addressed in this effort include such key areas as:
  - Regional mass care and shelter
  - Large-scale evacuation
  - Resource management (including personnel, equipment, and materials)
  - Public warning, public information and interoperable communication
  - Assisting people with disabilities and the elderly
  - Providing care and shelter for pets, service animals, livestock, and other large animals
  - Responding to power and utility losses
  - Coordinating transportation
- DPC has contracted for assistance with the Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS; the scope of work started in November, 2007, and will conclude in June, 2008, with a list of deliverables for CCP (as Phase I) to:
  - Identify all key stakeholders that would have an active role during a catastrophic emergency response in the Delta.
  - Develop an analytical approach to overlay existing plans and initiatives that will identify any emergency response planning gaps, overlaps, or conflicts within existing planning

- efforts.
- Survey existing plans and initiatives pertaining to emergency response in the Delta to determine the extent of planning efforts.
- Complete a review of several plans, offering a representative sample of trends and data found across federal, state, and local existing planning efforts.
- Develop bench marks, milestones, and deliverables to address and coordinate efforts together with all agencies and organizations involved with the Delta response effort for a comprehensive project.
- Consult with the UC Berkeley Center for Catastrophic Risk Mitigation, and other groups, to research viewpoints regarding what types of emergency response planning should be done.
- Document the results of these tasks into a Delta *Emergency Planning Strategy Report*, outlining a multi-phase/multi-year framework approach to collaborative work efforts in the Delta region.
- Identify, and in conjunction with the Delta Flood Response Group, apply for, funding sources for preparation of a Delta Regional Emergency Plan.
- Phase 1 completion date – June, 2008.
- Future Phases of work
  - Designing and completing a comprehensive Stakeholder and Organizational Assessment to design a large-scale collaborative approach to be used for Delta Emergency planning work to proceed (Phase II).
  - Initiating a plan development framework for integrating all current efforts by applying coordinated techniques, meetings and stakeholder involvement (Phase III).
  - Developing a fully-integrated Regional Emergency Strategy which will serve as both a coordination tool for current emergency operations as well as the structure for future emergency and homeland security work in the Delta region (Phase IV).
- Overall outcomes of this initiative include:
  - A seamless coordination of an emergency response effort in the Delta that would be unhindered by geographic or jurisdictional lines – a truly regional approach.
  - A clearly defined chain of command for state, regional, and local agencies in all emergency and flood fighting activities with particular attention paid to “societal” issues associated with emergency planning and response.
  - An educated population that is ready to help themselves, as well as to support their community during a catastrophic event.
  - An integrated framework of plans and initiatives coordinated within a comprehensive structure that allows for common terminology, shared assumptions, and mutually supportive data and involved stakeholders.

### **SUMMARY OF EMERGENCY PLANNING COMPELLING NEED**

The Sacramento and San Joaquin River Delta is a complex region. It is a confluence of cultures, economies, ecosystems, politics, and dependencies. And it is a region at risk. Catastrophic natural and subsequent human disaster could happen at any time and any place from flood and/or seismic related levee failures. This diversity and uncertainty demands proactive regional leadership. There is a compelling need for a single entity to facilitate regional problem solving that addresses myriad risk scenarios, protects Delta citizens, and respects jurisdictional diversity. The Delta Protection Commission should lead these discussions for the following reasons:

1. The regional complexity of the Delta (i.e., multiple governmental and infrastructure jurisdictions, natural features, etc) demands unique, innovative, and unified methods to respond to

emergencies in a nimble and effective manner. The current Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) provides the bedrock of local and statewide response however, the nuances of Delta conditions require more than SEMS offers.

2. Hurricane Katrina, the Jones Tract levee failure, and the Delta flood events of 1986, 1997, and 2006 provide tangible examples of social risk, uncertainty, and the challenge to coordinate and serve citizens during crisis. The “fog of crisis” is inevitable but should and can be lessened by thoughtful and appropriate planning. An absence of a coordinated response places Delta citizens at heightened risk—especially for a truly catastrophic event that has yet to occur, but has been predicted for the future.
3. Coordinated education is essential to prepare Delta citizens to help themselves during a crisis until and after first responders arrive. For the first 3-5 days the Delta region will be largely on its own to cope. Pooling resources from several jurisdictions will provide unified messages, coordinated preparedness, and leverage cost efficiencies that will benefit all Delta organizations and citizens.
4. The economic well-being of Delta communities depends on an ability to be and appear sustainable. Given the inherent uncertainty of where a crisis would occur, the absence of a regional, comprehensive approach to address Delta catastrophic risks calls such social and economic sustainability into question.
5. All Delta communities and geographic areas are not the same. Some may be at more risk than others due to physical location, adjacency to infrastructure, age of structures, condition of levees, and other conditions. A regional problem solving approach needs to address and respect this diversity, offering options to communities that want choices, and autonomy to communities that do not. This approach is best lead by an organization of the Delta that understands the region and has the collective interests of the wider community in mind.
6. ‘Flood fighting’ is a critical component of emergency response. However, flood fighting focuses on the physical aspects of a crisis. The Delta needs equivalent methods to address the social aspects of a flood crisis. Whether it is evacuation coordination, communicating, or dealing with mass care & shelter, the Delta needs comprehensive, multi-scenario planning to protect lives and property. Such planning starts with focused dialogue.
7. Funding may be available to proceed with many of these efforts through the Federal Department of Homeland Security or other entity. The Commission is in a unique position to advocate for many of these benefits and provide a focused voice for the regions needs—and act as a single focal point through which to build a sustainable and comprehensive emergency planning initiative.

The collective vision of current emergency management specialists from Delta jurisdictions is a region that benefits from seamless coordination for response needs unhindered by geographic or jurisdictional lines; an educated and informed population ready to help themselves as well as to support their community; coordinated management of flood fight crews, supplies and equipment in the Delta basin through a real-time, shared logistics system; and enhanced operability of communications systems during an event that allows for fluid interaction and response coordination. This desired condition is potentially achievable—but only if one centralized organization asserts the leadership to coordinate the diverse interests and needs of the Delta region and provides the catalyst for public safety advanced planning.